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Cosmopolitanism in Concord: The Transcendentalists and Their Neighbors

Robert A. Gross

How do you write a local history of a trans-local movement? That is the challenge I took up when I set out to pursue *The Transcendentalists and Their World*. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, during the heyday of the new social history, I was eager to explore how Concord, Massachusetts, became the epicenter of transcendentalism: gathering place of Emerson and his disciples, setting for Thoreau's experiment at Walden, staging ground of anti-slavery activism. Nowhere did dissenting intellectuals find so congenial a home as this ancient farming town sixteen miles west of Boston; the historian Stanley Elkins dubbed it the cultural capital of the antebellum North.¹ Why Concord? What circumstances, beyond ancestry and birth, linked the transcendentalists to the community in which they lived and wrote? Did the new philosophy to which Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller, and Alcott gave voice speak to the cultural values or social experiences of the townspeople in an era of unprecedented change? If so, was Concord representative of Massachusetts or of New England as a whole? Such an inquiry, I anticipated, would help us discern the affinities as well as differences between the Concord writers and their neighbors, to explore their respective responses to the currents of the times, and thereby to gauge the appeal and impact of transcendentalism in everyday life. Applying the methods of community study, I proceeded to immerse myself in the local sources, confident that the answers would come readily and never guessing that I would still be engaged in this project three decades later.

Yet, the localism in which this study was conceived confronts a serious objection from the start. Why look for close correspondence between Concord and its writers? Transcendentalism crystallized as philosophy and movement among liberal Protestants in the greater Boston-Cambridge region, extending from Groton and Lancaster in the west to Bangor and Hallowell in Maine to Providence in the southeast. It claims no single birthplace. The new way of thinking appealed to a small cohort of men and women coming of age in the 1820s and 1830s. Spiritually restless, intellectually ambitious, they broke out of the narrow frame of New England culture, with its tried-and-true

tenets of Lockean empiricism and Scottish Common Sense, and seized upon the most advanced ideas of the Romantic age emanating from Germany, France, and Britain. Far from affirming the local and the particular, transcendentalists challenged the provincialism of their Yankee neighbors. "No intellectual circle in early America," Charles Capper reminds us, "thought so self-consciously of itself . . . as at once individualist, nationalist, and cosmopolitan . . ." At the height of his radicalism, Emerson had little to say about specific local issues; he built his reputation by discerning "the signs of the times" and interpreting them under the eye of eternity. As for Thoreau, the native son who boasted of being born in "the most estimable place in all the world," he formed his literary imagination in the "deep time" that Wai Chee Dimock has recently stressed as the ground of American literature. In Thoreau's cosmopolitan consciousness, the fundamental debates of the Bhagavad Gita over war and peace, to take one example, were remade in the crucible of the Mexican War. "Concord, Massachusetts, might be an American locale," Dimock writes, "but it is irrigated by an ancient text from India."²

If transcendentalism was neither born in Concord nor bounded by it, what is the point of going local and placing Emerson and Thoreau in the town setting? Actually, this formulation of the problem derives from a short-sighted conception of community. Concord no more engendered transcendentalism than did any other place in the greater Boston area. The leading figures of the movement—Emerson, Fuller, Alcott, Peabody, Ripley, Brownson—were peripatetic folk, who shuttled about the region and beyond in search of fulfilling vocations and stable homes; only Thoreau stayed where he was born, and even he briefly sojourned in the environs of Manhattan and participated in the metropolitan world of culture that, from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other urban centers, disseminated books and ideas throughout the land. Then again, their neighbors, in town and country alike, were equally on the move, crowding into the expanding cities, pioneering the West, and roaming the seas. In 1835, as Emerson was settling in Concord with his new bride, Lydia Jackson from Plymouth, he was part of a steady stream of newcomers—two out of

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every three taxpayers that year—floating in and out of town, their numbers compensating for the constant drain of emigrants. The population, a little over 2,000, was almost entirely Yankee, grown up from the New England countryside, with periodic additions from Boston and the seaboard; hardly anyone from below the Mason-Dixon line ever moved in. Two decades later, with the coming of the railroad, the town grew more diverse, as Irish immigrants poured in and natives made an exodus. By 1855, one out of every five inhabitants was an Irish immigrant, whose children amounted to just about half of all births—to the dismay of town clerk George Heywood, who kept a running count of Irish and native infants and took heart whenever the ratio between them fell. 1860 was a particularly good year: “America will have cause to be hopeful,” Heywood exulted.³

This constant shuffling of people eroded local allegiances, widened horizons, and fostered cosmopolitan views. In that expansion of consciousness lies the key to interpreting the transcendentalists and their world. Out of the social upheaval of New England from the 1820s to the 1840s emerged a generation accustomed to thinking beyond the confines of neighborhood and town and seeing their lives in regional, sectional, national, even international terms. The transcendentalists paved the way in this embrace of the wider world, scouring new realms of the mind like Salem merchants opening the China trade and bringing home radical and disturbing ideas that would at once unsettle and assist their countrymen in adjusting to the enlarged circumstances of their lives. Thinking globally and acting locally, Emerson and Thoreau were adopting habits of mind evident everywhere about them.

The forces driving this new cosmopolitanism in Concord are familiar to historians: the advance of markets and competition, outmoding older practices of local provisioning, deepening dependence on outsiders, and heightening inequalities within the town; the break-up of church unity at the peak of the conflict between Unitarians and evangelicals that brought down the Standing Order of Massachusetts and inaugurated a new era of religious diversity; the surge of popular democracy through the rise of political parties competing furiously for power not just in state and national elections but in town meeting as well; the proliferation of voluntary associations growing out of trans-local campaigns to foster education, refine manners, and improve morals; and the incorporation of the town into a tightening network of transportation and communications, bringing the latest periodicals, books, and entertainment from the wider world. Emerson aptly characterized this wave of change as an “age of Revolution.” It took the small, ordered society founded by Puritans and defended by Minutemen and unsettled it through the expansive forces of capitalism and democracy. It challenged a world of inherited institutions and involuntary associations with a new premium on autonomy and choice. It exposed people to cosmopolitan currents of thought and endowed them with unparalleled opportunities. And it fostered uncertainties, undercut established beliefs, raised new hopes, stirred dreams of perfection, and created an audience for new ideas, which the transcendentalists were happy to supply.

Emerson and Thoreau could witness all these changes from their vantage in the village, the outpost of urban civilization in a largely rural countryside. Concentrated in the center were the people and enterprises fueling Concord’s outward thrust and diminishing local autonomy in the process. Actively fostering

connections to distant markets, local businessmen built turnpikes, ran stagecoach lines, pushed for free bridges into Boston, and played a leading part in organizing the Fitchburg Railroad, with Concord well-positioned along the route. Through their initiative, the town acquired the institutions of modern finance—two banks and an insurance company—and the cash economy that came with them. The transcendentalists took advantage of these innovations, with Emerson riding the stage and the rails to deliver his lectures and Thoreau borrowing from the bank to pay the costs of publishing *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. (Emerson guaranteed the loan.) At town meetings and in the local press, the writers could observe Jacksonian democracy at work, with battling politicians advocating agendas set in Boston and Washington. The Democratic leader, Francis Gourgas, operated the *Concord Freeman* while holding a patronage post in the Boston customs house (alongside Nathaniel Hawthorne). Local Whigs assailed him as a pawn of outsiders, behaving at town meeting like a “drunken [Boston] brawler,” but they were no less eager to come to the aid of their party, organizing a “great Harrison barbecue” that brought a crowd of some 10,000 to Concord on July 4, 1840, to rally for “Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too.” Far from suffering an external invasion, the inhabitants were willing agents of the forces transforming their community.⁴

Even the crusaders for moral reform, who despised economic calculation and partisan self-seeking, advanced the integration of Concord into the wider world. In the late 1830s, local abolitionists enlisted in the campaign to flood Congress with anti-slavery petitions. With such female activists as Thoreau’s mother and aunts in the lead, the crusade garnered signatures from nearly two thirds of the town’s women and a quarter of the men (including Emerson and Thoreau). But little about the enterprise derived from the grassroots. The memorials were composed, printed, and disseminated by abolitionists in Boston and New York; the only thing unique about them was the signatures inscribed on sheets of paper glued to the printed forms. Concord natives were no more likely to subscribe than the transient neighbors they barely knew. In a world of relentless mobility and expanding communications, popular opinions were no longer determined by the culture of a single town. Abolitionism decisively advanced this change. Employing the most advanced technology and communications of the day, the anti-slavery campaign swept up local communities in a movement that was a powerful agent of standardization.⁵

Emerson arrived in Concord at the very moment the balance was tipping in favor of trans-local forces. As familiar authority waned and older institutions lost hold, people looked for new guides to conduct in the transformed social landscape. The fundamental question of the day, Emerson said, was “How shall I live?” With a brazen cosmopolitanism that sought out wisdom in all times and places and with inordinate confidence in the God within, the transcendentalists addressed this quandary with strategies for self-making in an ever-changing world.

Were the neighbors listening? Certainly, they had ample opportunity to hear the transcendentalists’ message. From the mid-1830s to the 1860s Emerson lectured to the Concord lyceum 126 times, Thoreau nearly three dozen, and each spoke out from local platforms in the abolitionist cause. Yet, for all the respect Emerson commanded and the cool attention Thoreau received, it is only by literary license that we can call Concord a transcendentalist town. Few inhabitants embraced the call for self-trust and “came out” of established institutions. Garrisonian abolitionism won over only a

small minority of inhabitants, mostly women, and found its strongest base of support in the Thoreau family circle. Thoreau's retreat at Walden, designed to wake the neighbors up, struck them instead as odd—a willful act of isolation in a community where hardly anyone lived alone.

Even so, in the diaries, letters, and memoirs of townspeople, especially the middle-class men and women living in the central village, we can discern compelling connections to the transcendentalists. Consider Martha Prescott, a teenager at the Concord Academy in the mid-1830s, who kept a journal of her thoughts, in which she recorded the lectures and sermons she heard, appraised the books she read, and scrutinized her aspirations for herself and her relations with others. At age eighteen, Prescott was an intellectually ambitious, idealistic young woman, who took pride in thinking and judging for herself. "I would be a learned woman," she pledged, and "have much treasure in my own mind." Unfortunately, her studies were periodically interrupted by household duties—a drudgery she detested. "Who can be contented to be a mere housekeeper?" she exclaimed, "A manager of all the things in the world. May I be delivered from that." Contemporary courtship and marriage held little attraction. Disdainful of both "belles" and "blues," Prescott serenely contemplated a future as an "old maid"—"a Life of single blessedness, if I may only have time to read & study & can escape cooking & all other 'about house' horrors."⁶

This independent spirit extended into the realm of religion. Raised as a liberal Protestant, worshiping in Ezra Ripley's church, Prescott yearned for a more fervent faith. She was impatient with boring sermons and empty rituals and as dubious as any transcendentalist of John Locke's empirical arguments for faith. In her spiritual restlessness she inclined to a religion of nature: "the woods, the fields are God's fittest temple." Sadly, there was no one to whom she could confide her doubts, not her step-mother, who didn't understand her, not the pastor, nor any of her peers. "People stare if anything is said by one so young about religion." So, Prescott withdrew into the solitude of her diary, all the while yearning for sympathy and feeling a little sorry for herself: "Who loves me for myself alone?" From a distance she admired a few superior souls—in particular, Elizabeth Hoar and Waldo, who confronted the death of Charles Chauncey Emerson with extraordinary composure. "What a beautiful religion," Prescott remarked, "which can support them now."⁷

With her intellectual aspirations and religious discontent, Martha Prescott would appear open to transcendentalist sentiments—all the more so, when we consider that her father, a prosperous merchant-turned-politician, was a Jacksonian Democrat of an egalitarian stripe and an abolitionist to boot. On August 31, 1837, he traveled into Cambridge to attend Emerson's Phi Beta Kappa lecture at Harvard (though apparently Martha did not accompany him). Given this background, Martha Prescott seems a likely candidate to join in Margaret Fuller's conversations and participate in transcendentalist circles. But she never took those unconventional steps. Instead, she stayed within the Unitarian church, affirming the necessity of formal religion—"We cannot have the spirit of christianity without its outward, strict observances"—marrying a rising young lawyer with conservative Whig politics (and a healthy disdain for Thoreau), and setting aside her journals and the introspection they involved.

Why did Prescott and so many others in Concord, with their aspirations to culture, ardent piety, love of nature, and pride in the

liberty and independence they deemed the heritage of Puritans and Minutemen, take inspiration from Emerson's words but decline to put them into action? The answer may reside not in their personal sensibilities but in the public reputation of transcendentalism as a movement. By the late 1830s, following the "miracles" controversy, the furor over Alcott's Temple School, and Emerson's Divinity School Address, the transcendentalists were notorious as a band of atheistic radicals threatening religion, morals, and social order. It took unusual boldness to join their ranks, especially since the new philosophy of idealism was couched in language difficult for many to comprehend, denied the comforts of revealed religion, and set its adherents in a stance of "virtual hostility . . . to society and especially to educated society." To be a transcendentalist, Emerson suggested in his lecture of that name, was to be "lonely," discontented, demanding, living on the fringes of society and waiting for a moment of greatness. It is no wonder transcendentalism was not a popular movement.⁸

Nonetheless, as seen from Concord, the transcendentalists sustained a conversation with their neighbors over several decades, whose meanings I am still seeking to fathom. It is worth noting that in 1840, at the height of his radicalism, Emerson was elected to the exclusive Social Circle, the self-selecting club of the local elite. Should we view this choice as recognition of the essential soundness of the local sage, who would shortly cite his love of Concord as a key reason for declining to join Brook Farm? Or perhaps we should find in the elite acceptance of Emerson an openness to new ideas and radical questions in a community seeking to redefine its identity in an era of rapid and unsettling change. In this quest, Emerson urged his neighbors to cultivate their better selves, whereas Thoreau held them up to pity and scorn. Whatever their differences in attitude and tone, the two figures ultimately worked to similar effect. In their religion of nature, their strenuous vision of culture, and their quest for inspiration by heroes in the past, Emerson and Thoreau gave an articulate rationale for the new identity Concord would assume in succeeding years. That message would reinforce the cosmopolitan direction in which the villagers were already headed, enter into the mainstream of anti-slavery in the 1850s, and inspire idealistic thoughts in readers for decades to come.

Notes

¹Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 141-142.

²Charles Capper, "'A Little Beyond': The Problem of the Transcendentalist Movement in American History," in Conrad Edick Wright and Charles Capper, eds., *Transient and Permanent* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1999), 33; Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 48-58 (quotation, 58); Barbara L. Packer, "The Transcendentalists," in Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Literature. Volume 2: 1820-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 329-604; Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 9.

³Robert A. Gross, "The Transformation of *Walden*, 1845-1854: The Fate of Social Reform and Political Radicalism in the North," lecture presented in Distinguished Lecturer Series, Graduate Center of the City University of New York, April 19, 2004; William M. Bailey, Janet M. Beyer, and Anna M. Manion, *A History of St. Bernard's Parish* (Concord, Mass., 1986), 7.

⁴Robert A. Gross, "Transcendentalism and Urbanism: Concord, Boston and the Wider World," *Journal of American Studies* 18 (December 1984): 361-381; *Yeoman's Gazette*, December 2, 1837.

⁵Robert A. Gross, "Humanitarian Interests: Anti-Slavery Activism in Concord, Massachusetts, during the First Decade of Abolitionism," presented at conference on "Humanitarian Responses to Narratives of Inflicted Suffering," sponsored by University of Connecticut Humanities Institute, October 13-15, 2006; Robert A. Gross, "A Petitioner's Tale: Anti-Slavery Activism in Concord, Massachusetts," presented at annual meeting of the Society of Historians of the Early American Republic, Montreal, Canada, July 21, 2006.

*Martha Lawrence Prescott, Diary, December 10, 1834-May 17, 1836, Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library; reprinted in Leslie Perrin Wilson, ed., "'Treasure in My Own Mind': The Diary of Martha Lawrence Prescott, 1834-1836," *Concord Saunterer* n.s. 11 (2003): 93-152.

†For a fuller treatment of Prescott, see Robert A. Gross, "Young Men and Women of Fairest Promise: Transcendentalism in Concord," *The Concord Saunterer* n.s. 2 (Fall 1994): 5-20; Wilson, ed., "'Treasure in My Own Mind.'"

‡Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" and "The Transcendentalist" in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays & Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 63, 200.



Brian Donahue lecturing at the Concord Free Public Library, December 8, 2007. (Photo courtesy Michael Frederick)

Transcendence: Seekers and Seers in the Age of Thoreau, A Review

Laura Dassow Walls

François Specq, *Transcendence: Seekers and Seers in the Age of Thoreau*. Trans. Randall Conrad and James Williston. Higganum, Conn.: Higganum Hill Books, 2006. 269p.

This trim book of essays comes to American students of transcendentalism from France, proof in hand that there is, indeed, lively and ongoing interest in Thoreau in the Gallic heart of Europe. François Specq, a long-time member of the Thoreau Society, is Professor of American Literature and Culture at the Ecole Normale Supérieure Lettres et Sciences Humaines in Lyon, France, where he specializes in nineteenth-century American literature. This collection gathers together a number of his recent essays on Thoreau, Emerson, Melville, and the painters Frédéric Church and William Bradford, making them available for the first time in English. Specq's multiple perspectives as a French Americanist with a Thoreauvian angle of vision are what make these essays so refreshing: though shot through with great breadth of reference and knowledge, they have a winning intimacy of tone. One of Specq's themes is the interplay of knowledge and

ignorance in Thoreau, who advised us that "to be really present in the world" we must not only learn science but forget it (70). Similarly, these essays seek to be "really present" to the writers and painters Specq considers, not to display scholarly expertise but to create a state of informed openness that can allow us to query the texts before us as if for the first time. Specq writes as a deeply thoughtful Thoreauvian to fellow enthusiasts, questing, thinking aloud, sharing. As I read I felt as if I were listening in, after a particularly riveting day at the Annual Gathering, to an intense conversation over a late night beer at the Concord Inn.

Take, for instance, his long meditation on Thoreau's journal entries for November 1-2, 1858—entries chosen not as "representative nor exemplary" but because they formulate "the heart of the enterprise of the Journal," revealing in microcosm the dynamism of the whole and pulling in by association other passages to form "a living constellation" of Thoreau's thinking (55). Specq "untangles the skein" of these dense entries, tracking and backtracking, turning Thoreau's words from side to side, to offer not so much an argument about what it all means, some sort of "essence," but a direction: in this way, following the passages of Thoreau's thoughts might lead us to our own. Like Thoreau, his model, Specq seeks not "to attain such an essence by reducing the facts themselves to ashes" but instead by exploration to proclaim "the joy of seeing," of leaving one's life open "to those rude and tender shocks that jar the passing days" (70).

Throughout his discussion of Thoreau, Specq takes up the interplay of mind and world, considering how "objects" in Thoreau are not simply objective but "*propositions of being*." By taking them up, "*taking the initiative*," Thoreau converts nature into history, space into time, being into an ever-renewed state of becoming (66-67). Specq worries that without this taking up, this "*initiative*," we will continue to see wild nature as a tourist preserve, "cut off as if by a bell jar from its real physical and historical environment" (32)—as Thoreau himself was tempted to do. In his opening essay Specq contrasts Thoreau with Frédéric Church's grandiose visions of sublime nature. Church, "the painter of transcendence," offers nature as a radiant promise of divine nationhood, whereas Thoreau, more skeptical, turns away from the national evangelism of manifest destiny toward an uncertain and even vertiginous nature which we do not simply stand and admire but within which we must ever be on the move. For Thoreau, redemption lay not in a higher reality but in the act of perception, "a dizzying, unsettling encounter with the sheer enormity of the universe, restored to its full substance and temporality" (47). Responding to that "gravitational pull of substance" was for Thoreau not merely an aesthetic but an ethical act, an intense search not for the meaning of nature but for the meaning of our life. In this sense, Thoreau could be writing anywhere—or everywhere: "The Concord of Thoreau's Journal is no more Concord than Cézanne's mountain is located near Aix-en-Provence in southern France." Or as he adds later, "The Journal could almost be captioned, 'this is not Concord.' Thoreau, like Cézanne painting Mont Sainte-Victoire over and over throughout his life, explores the complexity of the links and the processes by which, in and through man, the visible is elaborated. In other words, the place only *takes the place* of an unlocatable confrontation with the world" (50, 72; emphasis in original).

Having led us to Thoreau via the contrast with Church, Specq leads onward to Emerson, whose own moral pragmatism is enacted not only *in* his writing, but *by* it, by its destabilizing

rhetoric: as Thoreau dissolves Church's static paintings into a lived dynamic, so does Emerson dissolve art into life, the oratorio into "the living voice, the simple and democratic instrument by which we may hear the concert of existence interpreted by every individual" (102). Specq concentrates on two of Emerson's less-often-read essays, "History" and "Address on the Fugitive Slave Law," where moral crisis leads Emerson to renew the Jeremiad's call to reform through individual, not communal, repentance.

But just as we think all is well with the transcendentalist's world, Specq turns to Melville, to show how "The Piazza" deflates transcendence and then, in a brilliant essay, how "The Encantadas" stages "a parade of monsters 'bred by the sleep of reason.'" In this tour through the Galapagos Islands, the Pacific's grotesque heap of ruins (which, ironically, provided Darwin with his great breakthrough insight), Melville parodies the very scientific knowledge that Thoreau honored, arguing not that an artful blindness might restore science to sight but that science is helpless to describe a hybrid and orphaned world from which God has vanished. Character after character sets out to incarnate an Emersonian self-reliance, only to be undone by the violence they have unleashed. Where Emerson in his antislavery writings envisioned a new rebirth, a new covenant, Melville refuses the American renaissance as rank illusion, returning us unremittingly to the truth—an unsettling and exacting truth that alone can save us.

Specq concludes with an essay on the Arctic explorer/artist William Bradford—a direct descendent of the founder of Plymouth Plantation—ending, as he began, with the mental reality of the landscape, both painted and photographed. Bradford learns that neither paint nor camera can fully represent this eerie northern land that defies definition, returning us baffled back to Thoreau's insight: what matters is not the artistic product but our attention to the process of living fully.

I plan to reread this book, saving it for some moment when I feel especially weighed down by the ever-growing burden of scholarship on these my three favorite writers and need to recapture the intimacy of Specq's fresh encounter. As with Thoreau's Cézannesque Concord, this French essayist reminds students of American literature that "This is not America"; it is wherever one stands, as Thoreau said in *Walden*, "right fronting and face to face to a fact" (98). Like Thoreau on the beach of Cape Cod, sometimes we need to stand for a spell and put all America behind us.

Two Blue Herons

Malcolm C. Young

Almost every reader of the *Journal* notices how Thoreau's ability to see nature improves. It records a new awareness of clouds, mouse trails, beech trees and hundreds of other phenomena. Along with this revolution in perception Thoreau's transcendentalism also seems to change. This becomes clear in his accounts of blue herons.

Sometime between 1842 and 1844, when his *Journal* was still chiefly a writer's workbook, Thoreau writes,

Two blue herons with their long and slender limbs relieved against the sky were seen traveling high over our heads—The lofty and silent flight of these birds wending their way at evening surely not to alight in any marsh on the earth's surface, but perchance on the other side of our atmosphere, was a symbol for the ages to study—whether impressed upon the sky—or sculptured amid the hieroglyphics of Egypt . . . [D]ense flocks of black birds were winging their way . . . to some shrine of theirs—or to celebrate so fair a sunset. . . .¹

Thoreau later published this account on one of the last pages of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. In that context it serves to create a sense of nostalgia and mystery as the sun sets on the river and as the two brothers (soon to be separated by death) approach home. The herons' chief function is literary: these birds create the "contemplative mood" in which Thoreau drifts from one transcendentalist topic to another. In the pages that follow, and ultimately conclude the book, Thoreau writes about silence "as the universal refuge . . . the sole oracle, the true Delphi."² The herons disappear into a mysterious silence and this sets the stage for him to fade into silence.

In his description of the blue herons Thoreau uses the passive voice. The birds were simply seen. He does not even say where he observed them. The black birds, too, remain unidentified. More importantly, he gives few physical details about the herons' shape, color, or pattern of flight. He does not refer to their habits or to their relation to the landscape or other creatures. From the passage we know nothing about where they nest, hunt, or mate. For the sake of emphasizing the transcendent aspects of his experience of the birds, he even goes so far as to say that they do not dwell on the "earth's surface." Their meaning is so intimately connected to Egypt and mythology that they almost have no real physical presence in nineteenth-century New England. Thoreau recognizes that they evoke a profound response, but really seems to know nothing more about them.

Thoreau's early account of his experience with blue herons is in stark contrast to the *Journal* of the 1850s. Far from emphasizing a mystical connection to ancient myths, Thoreau describes the blue heron as "the most common large bird we see." He usually uses an active voice to describe the birds and includes the location where he encountered them. He writes about their vision, nesting places, their comparative boldness after their young leave the nest, their relation to other birds. He notices their precise color and the places they like to perch. He gives careful descriptions of how they fly and how to distinguish them from other birds. He writes about the tracks they leave in mud and their eating habits. Thoreau notices that droughts "serve . . . the herons . . . confining their prey within narrower limits." He mentions their droppings and guesses about their breeding grounds. They make "a singular loud stertorous sound which I thought might have been

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made by a cow out of order, twice sounded.”³ Thoreau closely examines a blue heron skeleton.

Every year Thoreau accumulates more knowledge about the blue heron which allows him to better perceive it. On one of his last August days in Concord, Thoreau makes two drawings of the bird and writes at length about its habits. He writes,

Standing on the shallowest part of the bar. . . it was busy dressing its feathers, passing its bill like a comb down its feathers from base to tip. From its form and color, as well as size, it was particularly distinct. . . The neck is continually varying in length, as it is doubled up or stretched out, and the legs also, as it wades in deeper or shallower water. . . The arch may be lengthened or shortened, single or double, but the great spear-shaped bill and head are ever the same. A great hammer or pick, prepared to transfix fish, frog or bird. At last, the water becoming too deep for wading, this one takes easily to wing—though up to his body in water—and flies a few rods to the shore. . .

There they stood in the midst of the open river. . . They gave a new character to the stream. Adjutant they were to my idea of the river, these two winged men. You have not seen our weedy river, you do not know the significance of its weedy bars, until you have seen the blue heron wading and pluming itself on it. I see that it was made for these shallows, and they for it. Now the heron is gone from the weedy shoal, the scene appears incomplete. . . If you would know the depth of the water on these few shoalest places of Musketaquid, ask the blue heron. . . How long have we gazed on a particular scenery and think that we have seen and known it, when, at length, some bird or quadruped comes and takes possession of it before our eyes, and imparts to it a wholly new character (*Journal* 1906, XII:285-287).

In fewer than seventeen years, Thoreau's experience of the blue heron has changed completely. His earlier account, which dwells on the relation between this bird and myths that are foreign to it, has been replaced by a new appreciation for the bird itself. Understanding its habits makes him see it in a new light. In this passage, Thoreau notices particular aspects of its behavior. He guesses at how the bird responds to the changing depth of the water and to his presence. He admires the bird for its ability as a hunter and for its knowledge of the river. Thoreau knows about the bird's physiology and why it chooses to fly rather than swim.

At the same time this carefully acquired familiarity with the bird does not make this a less “transcendental” experience for him. Something extraordinary happens in this encounter. Thoreau gives the reader the impression of drawing nearer to another form of life and a picture of how that being fits into the greater cosmos. He accomplishes this without making light of what separates human beings from other species.

Thoreau re-mythologizes this “winged man” but he does this in a new way. He does not discount the importance of surface appearances. The bird's reality is not less human but rather beyond and yet still akin to the human. At no point does Thoreau allow the bird to have only a metaphorical significance. The bird does not function mainly to give this passage an “other-worldly” quality or to elicit an emotion about a remote antiquity or a future paradise. He addresses the bird as another knower who also loves the same river that he does, whose existence is essential to the “significance” of the river. The river's meaning cannot be known by anyone who has not encountered this heron.

In his admiration for the bird's knowledge of depths and shallows, Thoreau points out that the blue heron has made it his home in a way that he has not. He calls the blue heron an adjutant, that is a “staff officer . . . who assists the commanding officer and is responsible especially for correspondence.” This is from the Latin verb *adjutare*, “to help.” Perhaps Thoreau means to suggest that the blue heron is somehow a helper to God or nature, that this bird has responsibility for corresponding to him, or just that it

helps him to see the river more completely. Regardless of his intent in this particular allusion, the passage is concluded by a sense of revelation and surprise. Thoreau feels a kind of communion with the blue heron and with the Musketaquid, made possible by close observation.

Toward the end of his life, Thoreau does not approach nature merely for anecdotes. He does not only use examples from his study of natural history to increase the vividness of his romantic expressions about what really matters. Neither does he simply give an objective account of exactly what he sees in the hope that it will be of scientific interest. Instead, Thoreau looks carefully at nature. He recognizes that it has value apart from him, and that this does not exhaust its meaning. Thoreau sees in nature both a source for his own piety and a way of articulating his own yearning for transcendence. This kind of transcendentalism ultimately takes seriously the reality, independence and value of nature.

Notes

¹*Journal Volume 2: 1842-1848*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 46.

²*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, ed. Carl F. Hovde, William L. Howarth, and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 392.

³*Journal*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), XI:138. It is difficult to describe a sight or a sound without simply repeating it. Thoreau later writes that the blue heron makes “a short, coarse, frog-like purring or eructating sound. You might easily mistake it for a frog. I hear it a dozen times. It was not very loud. Anything but musical” (*Journal* 1906), XII:285).

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Sauntering Along Thoreau's Path on Brister's Hill

Joseph L. Andrews, M.D.

Concord, July 12, 2007—Today on Henry Thoreau's birthday (his 190th) about twenty members of the Thoreau Society have gathered at the new Thoreau's Path on Brister's Hill. These Thoreauvians have come from locales all over America and from several other countries as pilgrims to pay homage to one of Concord's most famous sons at this natural sylvan shrine.

Our guides today are Dr. Edmund Schofield, a former Thoreau Society President, and Matt Burne, an ecologist with the Walden Woods Project, which in 2006 completed this one mile long "self-guided interpretive trail that honors the many contributions of Thoreau."

They explain that the Trail has five sections. We start at the Entry Meadow, an open grassy field, that honors Thoreau the conservationist. Next we walk through Brister's Orchard, whose apple trees honor both Thoreau as social reformer and commentator, and Brister Freeman, a freed slave who lived nearby and planted apple trees on his land.

When we walk through the Sand Plain, which honors Thoreau the teacher and observer, we observe granite blocks on the ground in this open grassy clearing. Having just seen a Cooper's hawk circling in the sky above, we read the words from Thoreau's journal that are engraved on the block at our feet: "saw a large hawk circling over a pine wood, now soaring, now descending."

The section on Forest Succession honors Thoreau's role as pioneering ecological scientist. Shortly before his death in 1862 he made careful observations of plants and trees as they enabled a gradual progression from barren soil to meadow to forest. The Brister's Hill (East) area had been mined for sand and gravel through the 1960s. According to the Walden Woods Project, "Re-establishment of vegetation on this most disturbed part of Brister's Hill demonstrates the principles of forest succession" first formulated by Thoreau 150 years ago. First lichens and mosses return to grow on the bare soil. This is followed by grasses and shrubs. Next, dispersion of wind-borne seeds starts the growth of pitch pines, birches and cherry trees. Finally northern pines and oak trees take root.

The final section on the trail, the Reflection Circle, honors Thoreau's role as philosopher and writer and his profound influence on seminal thinkers, past and present. Here large granite blocks form a circle, like a forest Stonehenge, on which engraved quotations from Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, Rachel Carson, John F. Kennedy, Emily Dickinson, E. O. Wilson and others pay homage to the life and works of Henry David Thoreau. Nearby a large boulder bears a quotation from Dr. Seuss's Lorax: "grown forest / protect it from axes that hack," a prescient warning that has as much relevance today as when it was written.

As we walk along, our tour leaders brief us on the history of Walden Woods ecosystem and that of its Brister's Hill section. A huge glacier that receded thousands of years ago left sandy soil in the Walden Woods area. Its melted waters filled the glacier-

scooped "kettle hole," which is Walden Pond. The remainder of Concord was cleared of trees by colonial farmers. But, since the Walden Woods area was unsuitable for farming, because of its poor soil, it was one of the few areas that was not clear-cut by the 1850s. It was used as a wood lot for fire wood. It also served as a dwelling place for marginalized people such as freed slaves and Irish railroad workers (and from 1845 to 1847 for Thoreau). Until the 1960s Brister's Hill (East) was used as a sand and gravel pit.

There were many proposals to develop the land. In 1988 Boston Properties proposed building a large office complex, consisting of two three story buildings with 147,000 square feet of office space and a two level parking garage for 518 automobiles.

The Thoreau Country Conservation Alliance, led by Concord Thoreau scholar Tom Blanding, was formed to block this development. Texas-born, Hollywood-based singer Don Henley, the cofounder of the Eagles, heard about these efforts. He formed his own organization, the Walden Woods Project, which raised large sums of money for conservation through benefit rock concerts and by soliciting contributions from individuals and corporations.

Henley's group paid \$3.5 million for 18.6 acres of Brister's Hill (East) land in 1993 for "permanent protection of this historic landscape." (They had already paid \$3.55 million in 1990 to purchase and protect nearby land on Bear Garden Hill, which had been slated to become condominiums.) Today the Walden Woods Project, based in Lincoln, aims to "find solutions to the worldwide environmental challenges of the 21st century by encouraging advocacy for the conservation of our natural resources by supporting responsible stewardship, and by fostering an informed, motivated and involved citizenry."

So where was the Walden Woods Project in the recent clash between supporters of preserving Walden Woods' Brister's Hill (West), aka Deep Cut Woods, and the playing fields-only partisans, who voted to chop the trees and replace them with two artificial turf, plastic grass playing fields? Silence.

And, more pointedly, where were the citizens of Concord? Conservation? Stewardship? Involved citizenry? Silence. Where was the School Committee? The Town Manager? The Selectmen? The Natural Resources Committee? Silence.

Except for a small ad-hoc group of conservationists, Friends of Thoreau Country, who supported saving Brister's Hill (West) along with finding alternative locales for new playing fields (the Arena farm land?), few Concordians accepted their historic stewardship role to support conserving Walden Woods' Brister's Hill (West.). It is ironic that most of the money to purchase Walden Woods land for conservation so far has come, not from Concordians, but from outsiders, supporters of conservation from many other parts of the country, who have contributed to the Walden Woods Project.

If Concordians through two Town Meetings had supported conservation and stewardship more strongly, the Brister's Hill (West) portion of Walden Woods, above Concord-Carlisle High School, whose (former) trees are now chopped down, chain-sawed and pulverized, would continue to serve as an important accessible environmental laboratory for its nearby Concord-Carlisle High School students for generations to come. In contrast, the Brister's Hill (East) Thoreau Trail *will* serve as a paradigm for learning ecology and conservation for years to come. So, to paraphrase Thoreau: Now who speaks for wildness and for woods?

(A version of this essay appeared in the *Concord Journal*, August 9, 2007.)

Dejection or Joy, *As You Like It*: Schiller, Shakespeare, and Thoreau

Malcolm M. Ferguson and Ronald Wesley
Hoag

I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up," Thoreau famously brags from his *Walden* epigraph roost.¹ What makes him feel so cocky—in the morning and throughout the day, occasional bouts of the dumps notwithstanding—is the perceived ground tone of joy in nature, an elixir available to all. He says, also rather famously, in his 1842 essay "Natural History of Massachusetts," "To him who contemplates a trait of natural beauty no harm nor disappointment can come. The doctrines of despair . . . were never taught by such as shared the serenity of nature. . . . The spruce, the hemlock, and the pine will not countenance despair. . . . Surely joy is the condition of life."² To those down at the mouth he gives this advice, get over yourself and get into nature: "Think of the young fry that leap in ponds, the myriads of insects ushered into being on a summer evening, the incessant note of the hyla with which the woods ring in the spring, the nonchalance of the butterfly carrying accident and change painted in a thousand hues upon its wings, or the brook minnow stoutly stemming the current, the lustre of whose scales worn bright by the attrition is reflected upon the bank" ("NHM," 5). Dejection, Thoreau implies, is a solipsistic failure to break out of the self's morbid prison and breathe the revitalizing air.

In a natural world where accident and change are painted on the butterfly's beautiful wings (think of the moth in Frost's "Design"), and where the luster of the minnow's scales is the brightness of attrition's wear (think of pre-existential Sisyphus), time, change, and chance are universal law. Each day we decay: in the end we die. From this perspective, the condition of life seems less than joyful. Moreover, unlike the reflecting but unreflective brook minnow, stoutly if mindlessly stemming the current, human beings are, in the words of a fictional John Updike general science teacher, the "flint-chipping, fire-kindling, death-foreseeing" and therefore "tragic animal . . . called Man."³ Given that even the soundest and longest lived must eventually fail and fall, how does one avoid obsessing over Night Thoughts—especially when sickness sets in or death approaches?

"To the sick, indeed, nature is sick," Thoreau says, "but to the well, a fountain of health" ("NHM," 5). The "Conclusion" to *Walden* begins similarly, "To the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery" (*W*, 320). But the most salubrious change is accomplished, he explains, not by mindless migration like that of the buffalo but by "*extra vagance*," a willed wandering beyond the boundaries of our egocentric point of view (324). If, as he says, "the universe is wider than our views of it," then we must consciously widen our view to make it more universal, approaching—though fortunately never arriving at—the scope and ken of the whole rather than the part (*W*, 320). The trick is to think more like nature. At the end of *Walden*'s "Spring" chapter he boldly declares, "I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another; that tender organizations can be so serenely

squashed out of existence like pulp." Then, in an astonishingly paradoxical corollary to the leaping fry, emerging ephemera, chirpy hyla, nonchalant butterfly, and stoutly swimming minnows—all exuberantly fulfilling nature and evoking joy in the beholder—Thoreau catalogues a litany of gruesome casualties: "tadpoles which herons gobble up, and tortoises and toads run over in the road," and the literal rain of "flesh and blood" in a dog-eat-dog world where flesh and blood reign. He does so with his essential joy intact because, as with "the vulture feeding on the carrion which disgusts and disheartens us and deriving health and strength from the repast," life feeds on death to assure "the inviolable health of Nature." This "assurance" is Thoreau's acknowledged "compensation" for individual mortality, the consolation of a tubercular Concordian who, from what we know, managed to live with and die from his disease in generally good spirits. "The impression made on a wise man is that of universal innocence," he says of "the liability to accident" and death in nature (*W*, 318).

Indeed, instead of protracting this meditation on death, in the next paragraph in "Spring" he records, matter-of-factly yet symbolically nonetheless, the "putting out" of deciduous trees around the pond in early May, a spectacle that, to his eyes, "impart[s] a brightness like sunshine to the landscape, especially in cloudy days, as if the sun were breaking through mists and shining" (*W*, 318). His lesson, learned from—and re-taught with—the example of nature, is a paradoxical transcendental syllogism: remember that all that lives must die, yes; but remember, moreover, that life itself hearteningly goes on; and in the face of death do not neglect to live your life. Thus will death lose its sting and the grave its victory (see *W*, 317). In a June 2, 1853, journal entry anticipating his *Walden* epigraph, Thoreau explicitly attributes this death-defiant posture to chanticleer: "I am aware that I yield to the same influence which inspires the birds & the cockerils whose hoarse courage I hear now vaunted— So men should crow in the morning— I would brag like the chanticleer in the morning—with all the lustiness that the new day imparts— *without thinking of the evening when I & all of us shall go to roost*. With all the humility of the cock—that takes his perch upon the highest rail and wakes the world with his clarion brag [*italics added*]."⁴ Dwell in the perpetual morning, not upon the inevitable day's end. Here as in *Walden*, with an act of will and a stroke of his pen, Thoreau turns his attention—and would turn ours too—from mourning thoughts to morning thoughts, fulfilling his role as chanticleer.

Although Thoreau clearly finds the source of joy to be nature, he does not always go to nature to tap that source. In the same key passage in "Natural History of Massachusetts" he says, "I would keep some book of natural history always by me as a sort of elixir, the reading of which should restore the tone of the system" ("NHM," 4-5). If, for reasons of physical disability or distance, one cannot get out into nature, then at least one may read a natural book as a surrogate. Moreover, at those times when going to nature fails to bring insight and inspiration, then a book about nature might itself prove restorative. Firsthand or secondhand, whether from *Walden* or from *Walden*, "We need the tonic of wildness" (*W*, 317). Thoreau is Ralph Waldo Emerson's American Scholar in action, and his statement here alerts us to his belief in the sanguine influences both of reading nature directly and of reading about nature as well.⁵

Often cited, the allusion to Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" (1802) seems obvious enough in the *Walden* epigraph.⁶ Thoreau emphatically does *not* propose to write his book from the perspective of Coleridge's persona, who cannot transcend the limits of his own dejection to find joy in nature. Explicitly rejecting dejection as the subject of his "ode," Thoreau implicitly announces its opposite, joy found—and founded—in nature, as the subject and tone of *Walden*. While this negatively framed allusion directly invokes Coleridge's ode, it indirectly calls to mind another poetic model available to him—a model with widespread contemporary influence and a positive alignment with *Walden*'s celebration of nature's ongoing "poem of creation" (*W*, 85). Whether the topical and tonal connections between Friedrich Schiller's "An die Freude" ("To Joy," 1785 and 1803) and *Walden* are influence or confluence, seminal or simply coincidental, Schiller's poem is an illuminating and therefore noteworthy period backdrop to Thoreau's book, a kindred spirit positing joy in nature and the human need to imbibe it. *Imbibe* is an apt term in that Schiller's natural joy is more social and Dionysian (while also, oddly, more mechanistic) than Thoreau's. Let the record show, however, that the "Higher Laws" Thoreau who "rang[es] the woods, like a half-starved hound, with a strange abandonment" and a woodchuck-induced "thrill of savage delight" is himself no slave to moderation (*W*, 210).

A translation of Schiller's ode by John S. Dwight, published in Boston in 1839, declares in part,

Joy, thou brightest heaven-lit spark,
 Daughter from the Elysian choir,
 On thy holy ground we walk,
 Reeling with ecstatic fire.
 Thou canst bind in one again
 All that custom tears apart;
 All mankind are brothers, when
 Waves thy soft wing o'er the heart. . . .
 Sympathy with blessings crown
 All that in life's circle are!
 To the stars she leads us, where
 Dwells enthroned the great Unknown.
 Joy on every living thing
 Nature's bounty doth bestow,
 Good and bad still welcoming; —
 In her rosy path they go. . . .
 Myriads, do ye prostrate fall?
 Feel ye the Creator near?
 Seek him in yon starry sphere:
 O'er the stars he governs all.
 Joy impels the quick rotation,
 Sure return of night and day;
 Joy's the main-spring of Creation,
 Keeping every wheel in play.
 She draws from buds the flowerets fair,
 Brilliant suns from azure sky,
 Rolls the spheres in trackless air,
 Realms unreach'd by mortal eye.⁷

Unlike Coleridge's dejectedly alienated speaker, Schiller's poem promotes a convivial *joie de vivre* derived from an appreciation of and involvement in a mechanically perfect yet mystically incomprehensible universal nature whose motive force is joy. *Walden*'s chanticleer, crowing to the neighborhood at the advent of a new day, is a bird of Schillerean feather in temperament, though less inclined to flock.

Although Thoreau's documented readings do not include the ode "To Joy," he did own two books by Schiller, owned and commented on Carlyle's *The Life of Friedrich Schiller*; *Comprehending an Examination of His Works* (1837), and even

likely alluded to a Schiller poem (or song), "the *Ranz des Vaches*," in *Walden* (*W*, 158).⁸ Also, fellow transcendentalists including Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Frederic Henry Hedge were sufficiently impressed by Schiller to promote interest in his work.⁹ Moreover, the "Ode to Joy," as it was familiarly called, was widely known and influential in both literary and musical circles of Thoreau's time. Franz Schubert set the poem to music, for voice and piano, in 1815. Much more celebrated, however, is Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Opus 125, the original title of which, bestowed by the composer, was "Symphony with Final Chorus on Schiller's 'Ode to Joy.'" By the time Thoreau wrote *Walden*, Schiller's ode was pervasively in the air, resonating in the fourth movement of Beethoven's symphony since its 1824 first performance in Vienna.¹⁰

The likeliest candidate for promoting—and perhaps introducing—the "Ode to Joy" to Thoreau may well be John Sullivan Dwight himself, whose translation is quoted above. Dwight included this piece in his edition of *Select Minor Poems, Translated from the German of Goethe and Schiller*, which appeared in 1839 as the third of fourteen volumes in the *Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature* series (1838-1842) under the overall editorship of George Ripley. The transcendently inclined Dwight participated in the informal Hedge Club, or Transcendental Club, that met from 1836 to 1840, most often at Emerson's Concord home. According to Walter Harding, Dwight, who later joined Brook Farm, "undoubtedly met Thoreau at Emerson's more than once." He also published one of the first reviews of *Walden*, which he highly praised.¹¹ Identified as a pet project of the Transcendental Club,¹² the *Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature* series was clearly known to Thoreau. The fourteenth volume, *Songs and Ballads, Translated from Uhland, Korner, Burger, and Other German Lyric Poets* (1842), has been offered as the source of a likely *Walden* reference to Schiller's aforementioned "Ranz des Vaches."¹³ And the first nine volumes of *Specimens* are collectively catalogued in Sattelmeyer's *Thoreau's Reading*.¹⁴ Another promising link between the "Ode to Joy" and Thoreau is Dwight's advocacy of Beethoven's music. Indeed, Robert Richardson describes him as "a well-known music critic whose mission was bringing Beethoven's music to Americans."¹⁵ One of his favorite Beethoven compositions was the *Ninth Symphony*, which he praised unstintingly in a lengthy note to his *Specimens* translation of Schiller's ode. He says there, in part: "It is an interesting fact . . . that Beethoven, the most spiritual of composers, should have landed, after one of his sublimest adventurous flights on the ocean of sounds, in this song 'To Joy.'"¹⁶

What seems reasonably indisputable is that Thoreau, at the least, must have been aware of a literary—and perhaps musical—antecedent to his *Walden* ode to joy. Why, then, with this positive model available, did Thoreau cast his epigraph as a negative allusion to an ode to dejection? Three explanations come to mind, a non-exclusive list. First, as well known as the "Ode to Joy" had become, Coleridge's poem was yet better known and thus a more fathomable allusion—not that Thoreau regrets having "attained to obscurity" in *Walden* (*W*, 325). Second, because Schiller's poem is fundamentally more humanistic and less nature-grounded than Thoreau's book, an epigraphic nod to the "Ode to Joy" would be misleading, a red herring in a book of hounds, bay horses, and turtle doves whose trails are perplexing enough. Third, though not finally, Henry Thoreau was by nature a contrarian who found it

easier to say *nay* than *yea*. He would, as a rule, rather disagree than agree—the result of an oppositional disposition, to be sure, but also of a rhetorical posturing aimed at confronting his readers and waking his neighbors up.

While annotators have proffered roosters in *Reynard the Fox* and Chaucer's "The Nun's Priest's Tale" as models for Thoreau's bragging chanticleer, a chanticleer passage in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* bears multiple *Walden* connections that have gone unremarked. Thoreau rejects dejection as self-indulgent, unnatural melancholy—a failure to admit the healing influence of nature's prevailing joy. A similar rejection underlies the chanticleer passage in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (Act 2, Scene 7, Lines 12-43). Here the melancholy Jaques responds to foolish Touchstone's lament on mutability and mortality in which he "rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms, / In good set terms, and yet a motley fool":

"Good morrow, fool," quoth I. "No, sir," quoth he,
 "Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune."
 And then he drew a dial from his poke,
 And looking on it, with lack-lustre eye,
 Says very wisely, "It is ten a' clock.
 Thus we may see," quoth he, "how the world wags.
 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
 And after one hour more 'twill be eleven,
 And so from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
 And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
 And thereby hangs a tale." When I did hear
 The motley fool thus moral on the time,
 My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
 That fools should be so deep contemplative;
 And I did laugh sans intermission
 An hour by his dial. O noble fool!
 A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear.

Favorably impressed—indeed, tickled to laughter by Touchstone's affectedly morbid speech—Jaques envies the license afforded by "motley" to utter such thoughts without offense. But Shakespeare's laugh is, of course, on Jaques, as the fool's woe-is-me posturing cleverly mirrors his own habitual malaise, and especially his subsequent seven ages of man speech ending in "mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing" (Act 2, Scene 7, lines 139-166)—an ode to dejection ironically belied by the immediate entrance of the good servant Adam, aged and frail without a doubt, but worthy and venerated nonetheless. Thus, Jaques's "crowing like chanticleer, / That fools should be so discontented" unwittingly mocks his own dyspepsia.¹⁷

Thoreau owned Shakespeare's plays and quoted *As You Like It* three times in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, a book drafted during and completed soon after his *Walden* sojourn, with all three quotations taken from Act II and two specifically from the seven ages of man speech.¹⁸ This usage pattern anticipates an apparent "trout in the milk"¹⁹ similarity between the play's chanticleer passage and the Hermit and Poet dialogue in *Walden*'s "Brute Neighbors." Clearly indebted to the interlocutory model of Izaak Walton's *The Compleat Angler*,²⁰ the discussion between the Hermit and the Poet—and between the Hermit and himself—is probably derived from *As You Like It* as well.

Whereas Shakespeare's "deep contemplative fool" consults his dial with a "lack-lustre eye"—a lifeless eye—to see "how the world wags," Thoreau's "Brute Neighbors" Hermit betrays at the outset a quickened interest in the mundane life beyond his ascetic trance: "I wonder what the world is doing now. I have not heard so much as a locust over the sweet-fern these three hours" (*W*, 223). Despite his pretense of shunning the world in favor of meditation,

the Hermit is ripe for re-engagement. On the one hand, he asks himself, "Why will men worry themselves so? He that does not eat need not work. . . . O, they swarm . . . ; they are born too far into life for me. I have water from the spring, and a loaf of brown bread on the shelf." On the other hand, his mind having turned to the doings of men and nature "now," to the living world at this moment, his senses begin to inform his sense. "Was that a farmer's noon horn which sounded from beyond the woods just now?" he wonders. "Hark! I hear a rustling of the leaves. . . . Eh, Mr. Poet, is it you? How do you like the world to-day?" (*W*, 223). With this question a discussion begins between the arriving Poet, who says he has his "living to get" and is therefore going "a-fishing," and the Hermit, who must decide between continuing his meditation and accepting the Poet's invitation to join him in this sport. "I cannot resist," finally concedes the Hermit, whose revived senses include hunger; "My brown bread will soon be gone" (*W*, 224).

Often posited as a dialogue between Hermit Thoreau and Poet Channing, the "Brute Neighbors" debate also contrasts the bipolar pulls of mind and body within the Thoreauvian Hermit and Thoreau himself. "Let me see; where was I? Methinks I was nearly in this frame of mind; the world lay about at this angle. Shall I go to heaven or a-fishing? . . . I was as near being resolved into the essence of things as ever I was in my life. . . . I know not whether it was the dumps or a budding ecstasy" (*W*, 224-225). The implied answer to this implied question neatly concludes the oscillation in the preceding "Higher Laws" chapter between Thoreau's occasional impulse to devour a raw woodchuck and his likewise occasional fancy to give up almost all food but food for thought. In "Brute Neighbors" Thoreau suggests that, by turns but not exclusively, both impulses are correct. "There never is but one opportunity of a kind," concludes the Hermit—and every kind of opportunity is a moment to be seized. His meditative spell broken by awakened senses, by quickened curiosity about the world, and by the arrival of the Poet who tempts him to rejoin that world, the Hermit for the moment abandons meditation for recreation. "Well, then, let's be off," he tells the Poet. "Shall we to the Concord? There's good sport there if the water be not too high" (*W*, 225). With both men liking "the world to-day" quite well enough, the Hermit and the Poet hasten to their worldly engagement with the joyful sport of angling, presumably in a now joyful and expectant frame of mind.

Notably too, fishing is a kind of dial of its own, whose angled hours, as Walton observed, promote both contemplation and recreation, engaging simultaneously the senses and the mind with the world and the self. At the beginning of Touchstone's lament, he consults his sundial. In Emerson's introduction to the inaugural issue of *The Dial* in 1840, he explicates the transcendental implications of this new journal's name:

And so with diligent hands and good intent we set down our Dial on the earth. We wish it may resemble that instrument in its celebrated happiness, that of measuring no hours but those of sunshine. Let it be one cheerful rational voice amidst the din of mourners and polemics. Or to abide by our chosen image, let it be such a Dial, not as the dead face of a clock, hardly even such as the Gnomon in a garden, but rather such a Dial as is the Garden itself, in whose leaves and flowers and fruits the suddenly awakened sleeper is instantly apprised not what part of dead time, but what state of life and growth is now arrived and arriving.²¹

When Touchstone consults his dial, however, it reflects not the world's ambient sunshine, of which time is but the shadow, but

only his own adumbrated demise. Instead of being awakened by chanticleer to a new day's "life and growth" in the "Garden itself," Touchstone, like Jaques, chooses dejection about inevitable decay and death over joy in the life of the moment.

Not so Henry Thoreau, for whom "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. . . Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars" (*W*, 98). Engaging the essential joy in this world while joyfully anticipating the next; indeed, finding in the ever-greenness (even in winter) of the spruce, hemlock, and pine not the countenance (the expression or reflection) of morbidity and despair but the harbinger of physically continuous and spiritually eternal life—by doing these he may brag like chanticleer, "Thus I caught two fishes as it were with one hook" (*W*, 175).²² Like the "beautiful bug" whose *Walden's* end hatching strengthens "faith in a resurrection and immortality," chanticleer's exuberant wake-up call is another natural affirmation of "more day to dawn" (*W*, 333).²³

Notes

¹The title page epigraph is repeated in the chapter "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For." *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 84. Other page references to *Walden* will appear parenthetically in the text (*W*).

²*Excursions*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 5. Other page references to "Natural History of Massachusetts" will appear parenthetically in the text ("NHM").

³John Updike, *The Centaur* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 46.

⁴*Journal 6: 1853*, ed. William Rossi and Heather Kirk Thomas (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 172.

⁵In Emerson's words, "When he [the scholar] can read God directly [in nature], the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings." "The American Scholar," *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Volume I Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, ed. Robert E. Spiller and Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 57.

⁶See, for example, Walter Harding, ed., *Walden: An Annotated Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 81, and Jeffrey S. Cramer, ed., *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 81-82.

⁷The slightly revised 1803 version is the copy text of Dwight's translation. John S. Dwight, *Select Minor Poems, Translated from the German of Goethe and Schiller* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1839), 203-206, 435-437 note. Ironically, Schiller came to distance himself from "To Joy": "My Freude is a bad poem and marks a stage in my development, which I had to put completely behind me, in order to produce something decent." Quoted in Claudia Pilling, Diana Schilling, and Mirjam Springer, *Schiller* (London: Haus Publishing, 2002), 52.

⁸Thoreau studied German with Orestes Brownson in the winter of 1836. Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 45-46. He owned Schiller's *Geschichte des dreissigjährigen Kriegs* and *Maria Stuart* in addition to the Schiller biography by Carlyle. See Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading: A Study in Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 265 (items 1215, 1216), 146 (item 258). The *Life of Schiller* is mentioned briefly in Thoreau's "Thomas Carlyle and His Works" lecture (1846) and essay (1847). See Thoreau, *Early Essays and Miscellanies*, ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer, Edwin Moser, and Alexander Kern (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 232. "Ranz des Vaches" is the lyric opening to Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804). See John C. Hirsh, "Thoreau's *Walden*," *The Explicator* 39.1 (Fall 1980): 14-15; also noted in Harding, *Walden: An Annotated Edition*, 154, and in Cramer, *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition*, 153.

⁹Emerson wrote in his journal in October of 1832, "I propose to myself to read Schiller of whom I hear much." *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Volume IV 1832-1834*, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), 54-55. And in 1832 Margaret Fuller read "all the principal dramas and lyric poetry of Friedrich Schiller," according to Charles Capper in *Margaret Fuller, An American Romantic Life: Volume I, The Private Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 116.

¹⁰Rey M. Longyear, *Schiller and Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 140-141, 147.

¹¹*The Days of Henry Thoreau*, 63, 334. The review of *Walden* appeared in the August 12, 1854, issue of *Dwight's Journal of Music*, the influential periodical that he edited in Boston from 1852 to 1881.

¹²Wesley T. Mott, ed., *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 200-201.

¹³Charles T. Brooks, *Songs and Ballads; Translated from Uhland, Korner, Burger, and Other German Lyric Poets* (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1842), 133-134. For the *Walden* usage see note 8 above.

¹⁴Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading*, 261 (item 1175). The only *Specimens* edition mentioned separately by Sattelmeyer is C. C. Felton's three-volume translation of Wolfgang Menzel's book on German literature, from which Thoreau extracted several non-Schiller quotations. See 235 (item 968).

¹⁵Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 248.

¹⁶*Select Minor Poems*, 436. For more on Dwight see Wesley T. Mott, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Transcendentalism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 73-74.

¹⁷*The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 380-382.

¹⁸See Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading*, 267 (item 1231). Emerson, too, was sufficiently struck by this seven ages speech to include it in his edited poetry compendium, *Parnassus* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875), 151.

¹⁹"Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk," Thoreau wrote in November of 1850. *Journal 3: 1848-1851*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer, Mark R. Patterson, and William Rossi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 139.

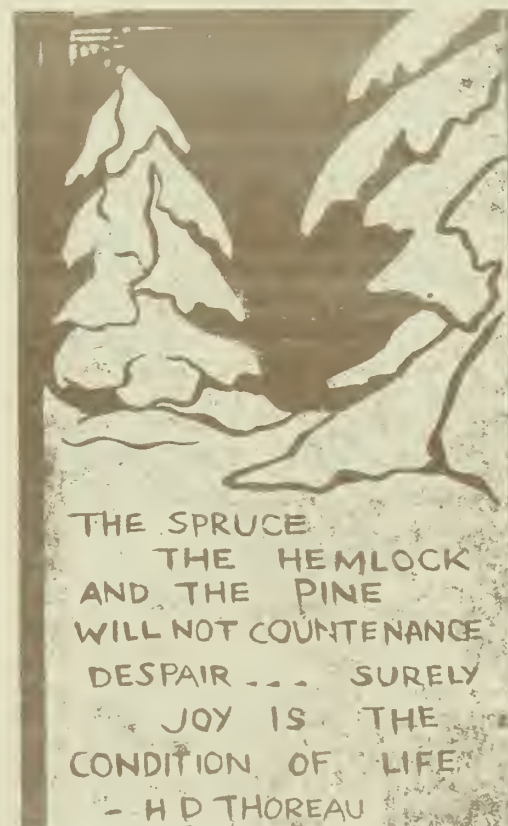
²⁰See Ronald Wesley Hoag, "Walton at Walden: Fishing with Thoreau," *Thoreau and Nature: The Whole Circle of Experience* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1982), 169-232. See also Robert Sattelmeyer, "'The True Industry for Poets': Fishing With Thoreau," *ESQ* 33.4 (1987): 189-201.

²¹"The Editors to the Reader," *The Dial* 1, No.1 (July 1840): 4.

²²In the terms of Wallace Stevens's poem "The Snow Man," Thoreau has assumed the natural "mind of winter" that allows him "To regard the frost and the boughs / Of the pine-trees crusted with snow" and "To behold the junipers shagged with ice, / The spruces rough in the distant glitter / Of the January sun" without thinking anthropocentrically "Of any misery in the sound of the wind." Published in October 1921 in the journal *Poetry*, "The Snow Man" was included in Stevens's first book, *Harmonium* (1923).

²³"To . . . hear the wild cockerels crow on the trees . . . over the resounding earth . . . would put nations on the alert. . . Who would not be early to rise, and rise earlier and earlier every successive day of his life? . . . All climates agree with brave Chanticleer. . . His health is ever good, his lungs are sound, his spirits never flag" (*W*, 127). See Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium* poem "Bantams in Pine-Woods" for a contrast between the "universal cock" and the "personal" observer.

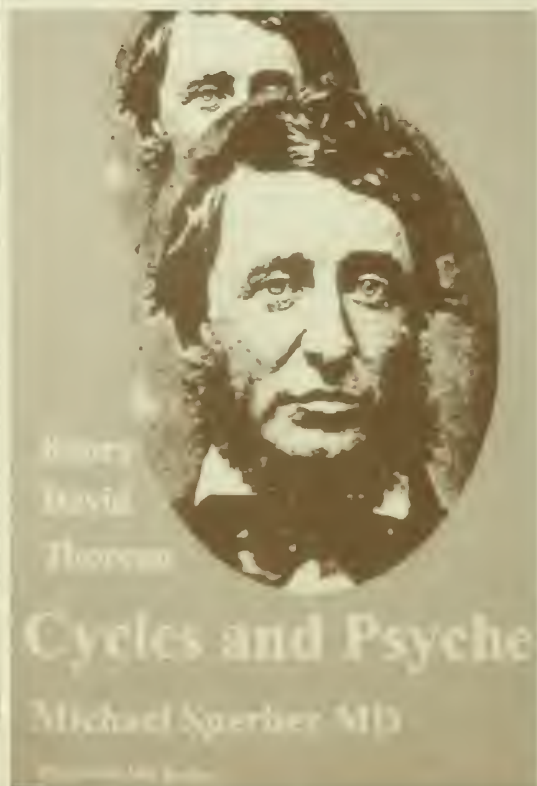
A Christmas card designed by the Arnold Fields family of Concord



Courtesy Malcolm Ferguson

Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography

- Besaw, Bridget. *Wildness Within Wildness Without: Exploring Maine's Thoreau Wabanaki Trail*. Privately printed, 2007. 102p. paperback. Collection of essays on the Maine wilderness with photographs by Besaw.
- Bottomo, Abigail. "Walking in Great Marsh." 2007. Union Institute and University. PhD dissertation. 234 pages.
- Casado da Rocha, Antonio and Garrett Barden. "Thoreau's Letters to Blake—How Spiritual Are They?" *Thoreau Society Bulletin* No. 260 (Fall 2007): 7.
- Chaloupka, William. "Thoreau's Political Legacy for American Environmentalism." *Conference Papers: Western Political Science Association* (2007): 1-28.
- Chen, Yu-zhong. "Upholding Manhood: A Study of Henry D. Thoreau's Social Criticism and Political Thought." 2007. Tankang University Graduate Institute of American Studies. MA thesis.
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- Gura, Philip. *American Transcendentalism: A History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007. 384p. hardcover (ISBN 0809034778), \$27.50. Reviewed by Michael Dirda in *The Washington Post Book World* (December 16, 2007): 10 and by Debby Applegate in *The Los Angeles Times* (December 14, 2007).
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- Keyes, Bob. "Sunday Chat: Trailing Thoreau." *Maine Sunday Telegram* (December 16, 2007). Interview with Bridget Besaw, who says of Thoreau: "So when I travel the same areas in northern Maine he did, I feel connected to something much greater than just that moment."
- Kimber, Robert. "The Attentive Thoreau." *Kennebec Journal* (December 2, 2007): A9.
- Meehan, Sean Ross. *Mediating American Autobiography: Photography in Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, and Whitman*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2008. 264p. hardcover (ISBN 0826217923), \$39.95.
- Miller-Rushing, Abraham J. "Impacts of Climate Change on the Phenology of Temperate Forest Plants and Birds in Massachusetts and Japan." 2007. Boston University. PhD dissertation. 301 pages.



Elegantly written and filled with surprising insights, Dr. Sperber's book adds a new chapter to our understanding of Thoreau. For those like myself, who have a knee-jerk reaction against psychological reductionism, be reassured—it is this doctor's erudition that makes this medicine go down.

Alan A. Stone, M.D.,
Touroff-Glueck Professor of Law and Psychiatry,
Harvard University

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- Moore, Kelly A. "The Crosscurrents of Culture in the Dialogic Pairing of Henry James' 'What Maisie Knew' with Zitkala-Sa's 'American Indian Stories' and of Henry David Thoreau's 'Walden' with Susan Fenimore Cooper's 'Rural Hours.'" 2007. State University of New York at Albany. PhD dissertation. 235 pages.
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- . *Thoreau at Walden*. New York: Hyperion, 2008. 112p. hardcover (ISBN 1423100395), \$16.99. Cartoon version of *Walden* for young readers by John Porcellino.
- . *Thoreau's Cape Cod*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008. 288p. hardcover (ISBN 0618758453), \$35.00. *Cape Cod* with photographs by Scot Miller.
- Tindol, Robert. "The Impact of Science on the American Literary Jeremiad." 2007. Claremont Graduate University. PhD dissertation. 320 pages.
- Ward, Andrew. "Ethics and Observation: Dewey, Thoreau, and Harman." *Metaphilosophy* 38, No. 5 (October 2007): 591-611.
- Wheeler, Joe. "Thoreau Farm Trust Assumes Ownership of the House in Which Thoreau Was Born." *Thoreau Society Bulletin* No. 260 (Fall 2007): 15.
- Wheelwright, Nathaniel T. "A Lead Slug, A Moose and Thoreau." *Kennebec Journal* (December 2, 2007): A9. The author, a descendant of George A. Thatcher, describes both the slug his family owns that Thatcher used to kill the moose described in *The Maine Woods* and his own moose hunt.
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- Wilson, Leslie Perrin. *In History's Embrace—Past and Present in Concord, Massachusetts*. Hollis, N.H.: Hollis Publishing Company, 2007. 140p. hardcover (ISBN 1884186416), \$21.95. Reviewed by Robert D. Habich in *Thoreau Society Bulletin* No. 260 (Fall 2007): 6.
- Winspur, Steven. *La Poésie du lieu. Segalen, Thoreau, Guillevic, Ponge*. Reviewed by François Specq in *Thoreau Society Bulletin* No. 260 (Fall 2007): 8-9.

Wood, David F. *An Observant Eye: The Thoreau Collection at the Concord Museum*. Reviewed by Randall Conrad in *New England Quarterly* 80, No. 4 (December 2007): 719-721.



We are indebted to the following individuals for information used in this *Bulletin*: Marjorie Harding, E. Bruce Kirkham, Michael A. Southwood, Richard E. Winslow III. Please keep your editor informed of items not yet added and new items as they appear.

Annual Gathering 2008

"The Individual and the State: The Politics of Thoreau in Our Time"

July 10-13, 2008

Concord, Massachusetts

Plan to join your fellow Thoreauvians!

Please check www.thoreausociety.org for a tentative listing of Annual Gathering presentations, hotel information, and more.

All the phenomena of nature need be seen from the point of view of wonder & awe—like lightning—and on the other hand the lightning itself needs to [be] regarded with serenity as the most familiar & innocent of phenomena.

Journal, June 27, 1852

Visit the Society's e-commerce site
www.shopatwaldenpond.org

President's Column

Tom Potter

Thoreau once wrote in a letter to H. G. O. Blake, "Where is the 'unexplored land' but in our own untried enterprises." This past year we explored some untried enterprises as we sought ways to bring a better balance into our operational costs. And so far things are looking better. The Board of Directors has become more aggressive in appealing for financial support, and you have come through.

Although we are not out of the woods yet, we can see movement in a positive direction. Through the staff's efforts at cost reduction and the new approach to the Annual Appeal we can look forward to the day when more of our efforts will be directed at exciting ways to bring the word of Thoreau to a broader base.

I thank those of you who were generous in your response to our efforts, for the confidence in the Thoreau Society and its programs that you supported with those extra dollars you sent.

As you know, the core of the Thoreau Society's efforts is based on the two publications, the *Concord Saunterer* and the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, and on the Annual Gathering. In addition, several educational programs are carried out through the year. These bring new faces to the fold. An excellent example of an effective program was the recent joint exhibit at the Concord Free Public Library, "Reconstructing Thoreau's World," that featured some of our collections and that sponsored three important lectures. In addition, this past fall there was a Concord lecture series featuring a number of well-known speakers.

I want to also thank Corinne Smith for her work on the website, Bob Hudspeth for editing the *TSB*, Laura Walls for editing the *Saunterer*, and Wayne Dilts for his work on the upcoming Annual Gathering. It looks to be an exciting event with a great lineup of presenters. Watch for details on the website, www.thoreausociety.org. Also, Dale Schwie devoted countless hours to making the Minneapolis event a success.

The board and I appreciate your support and we hope to see you in July. Please let us know of your presence.

If you care to drop me a note, put "Thoreau" in the subject line: tpotter@scican.net.

Notes & Queries

We thank the authors who contributed to this issue: **Joseph L. (Joel) Andrews** is a physician, author, Concord tour guide and Society member; **Malcolm M. Ferguson** is a past-president of the Thoreau Lyceum and a long-time member of the Society; **Robert A. Gross** is James L. and Shirley A. Draper Professor of Early American History at the University of Connecticut; **Ronald Wesley Hoag** is Professor of English at East Carolina University; **Laura Dassow Walls** edits the *Concord Saunterer* and is Bennett Chair of Southern Letters at the University of South Carolina; **Malcolm C. Young** wrote a dissertation on Thoreau at Harvard and now serves as the rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Los Altos, California.

Randall Conrad notes an interview with Philip Gura by Rich Barlow in the *Boston Globe* of November 17, 2007. The subject is Gura's new book, *American Transcendentalism: A History*. The book has also been nominated for the 2008 National Book Critics Circle prize for nonfiction. Randall also found numerous references to Thoreau's life and work in Andrea Barrett's novel *The Voyage of the "Narwhal"* (1996), which is set in 1855. Besides quotations from "A Winter Walk," *Walden*, and *A Week*, the novel refers to "Civil Disobedience" (someone on this arctic expedition has brought along *Aesthetic Papers*!) the higher law of conscience, and Thoreau's trip to Fire Island in the wake of Margaret Fuller's death in a shipwreck. Thoreau's British friend Thomas Cholmondeley appears among the correspondents of one expedition member. Finally, a sailor dies of lockjaw exactly the way Thoreau's older brother did in 1841, as the result of slicing his left-hand ring finger while stropping his razor.

Wayne Dilts finds Thoreau embedded in "Super Paper Mario," a Wii game. A character who "will throw things to help earn more points" is named "Thoreau."

Corinne Smith sends "The Old Scout" column by Garrison Keillor for September 18, 2007, in which he discusses "cheerfulness" by contrasting Emerson with Thoreau, whom he describes as "a sorehead and a loner whose clunky line about marching to your own drummer has found its way into a million graduation speeches." Corinne also heard Keillor's "Writer's Almanac" for November 25, in which he noted the birthday of Joseph Wood Krutch, a Thoreau biographer. The tireless Corinne found a "Thoreau College" in a novel by Sarah Strohmeier, *The Sleeping Beauty Proposal*. Finally, Corinne also sends "The Manley Arts: Book Groups," a column in *Booklist* for October 1, 2007, by Will Manley. He tells several anecdotes about his experience organizing a book discussion group, one session of which was devoted to *Walden*. He quotes a graphic artist who said about the bean field: "He's getting in touch with nature by making things grow, but he's also taming what's wild within himself."

Richard E. Winslow III notes that an essay on Essalen ("Where 'California' Bubbled Up," *The Economist* [December 22, 2007]) attributes the center's success to "a uniquely American enlightenment, in the tradition of Emerson and Thoreau, a cheerful union of intellect and spirit, body and soul."

Gary Bricher found a *Walden* quotation in the *Eugene [Oregon] Weekly* for January 10, 2008. A column by Robert

Thoreau on John Brown

A man of rare common sense and directness of speech, as of action; a transcendentalist above all, a man of ideas and principles,—that was what distinguished him. Not yielding to a whim or transient impulse, but carrying out the purpose of a life.

Emmons, "Hacking Away: Oregon's Land-Use Program under Constant Attack," ends by saying that *Walden* offers "counsel" to politicians who can only think about "more money for more jobs to build more houses and more roadways for more people to produce more waste". . . . 'A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.'"

Richard Smith's ear picked up Thoreau in the lyrics of the song "Cockermouth" by an English punk rock band, "The Mekons." "Back in time—I ramble / All left behind—I ramble / H. D. Thoreau—I ramble / Nowhere to go—I ramble"

The prize for the longest title—one that probably never will be surpassed—using Thoreau's name goes to Kin Platt, whose work of fiction comes from Farrar, Strauss and Giroux this year: *A Mystery for Thoreau: Being the Story of a Young Gentleman of the Press Who Dutifully Reported on the Strange and Bizarre Happenings in Concord, Massachusetts, in the Year of 1846, How He Dealt with Educated Transcendentalists and Lunatic, How He Became Involved with a Cruel and Savage Crime, and What Extreme Steps He Took to Ascertain the Identity of the Callous Perpetrator and Bring Justice to Bear, With Much Edifying Matter Concerning the Customs, Beliefs and Discoveries to Which That Distressing Calamity Gave Rise.*

Glenn Rifkin writes in the *New York Times* (May 18, 2007) about Concord as the home of eminent American writers, past and present, and Dean Christopher writes in the May 2007 issue of *Discovery* about pencil manufacturing in the United States. Included, of course, is a discussion of John Thoreau, Sr., and Henry.

Notes from Concord

Michael Frederick, Executive Director

Last fall the Thoreau Society sent out a direct mailing to public libraries and 2- and 4-year research libraries encouraging them to subscribe to our publications, *The Thoreau Society Bulletin* and the newly renamed *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies*. Through this initiative and working with various distribution channels, the Thoreau Society will increase circulation and readership of its newsletters and journal.

As serious interest in Thoreau is on the rise within the academic community, the Society wishes to engage the next generation of scholars and encourage research on the life, writings, and legacy of Henry D. Thoreau. The letter reproduced below celebrates our accomplishments as an organization and as a community of enthusiasts with a mission to promote Thoreau through education, outreach, and advocacy.

Dear Librarian,

You are invited to subscribe to two of today's most essential periodicals for the study of Henry D. Thoreau, the quarterly *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (ISSN 0040-6406) and the annual *Concord Saunterer: A Journal of Thoreau Studies* (ISSN 1068-5359). Act before 31 March 2008, and we will guarantee your subscription rate of \$60 per year through 2010.

We understand that you look for and appreciate journals that enrich your programs and bring essential information to your faculty, students, and patrons. We understand this firsthand because we have our own collection, one of the most extensive anywhere on Thoreau, his life, works, and legacy. It is located in historic Walden Woods at the Thoreau Institute's Henley Library.

The Thoreau Society was founded in 1941 by world-renowned Thoreau scholar Walter Harding, who edited the *Bulletin* for over 50 years. The Society is the oldest and largest organization devoted to an American author. Our members have produced the majority of Thoreau scholarship during the 20th century, and our publications continue to attract and foster top-flight scholarship into the 21st.

"The *Concord Saunterer* is a valuable aid to studies of Thoreau."

— Harold Bloom, Yale University

"The *Concord Saunterer* and *Thoreau Society Bulletin* contain valuable historical, biographical, critical, and bibliographical information about Henry David Thoreau and Transcendental Concord to be found nowhere else."

— Lawrence Buell, Harvard University

The Thoreau Society is an allied organization of the Modern Language Association and a member organization of the American Literature Association. We host two sessions every year at both the MLA and ALA conferences. Our publications circulate nationally and internationally to twenty-five countries. The *Bulletin* and the *Concord Saunterer* are referenced in the American Humanities Index and the MLA International Bibliography. All articles have been peer reviewed and meet the highest standards.

Thoreau studies have broadened significantly over the last twenty years, producing some of today's most exceptional interdisciplinary work. In addition to his importance to literary studies and human rights issues, the publication of Thoreau's previously unpublished manuscripts *Faith in a Seed* and *Wild Fruits* by Bradley P. Dean has revealed his significance to the sciences, as well.

"Thoreau, who rightfully can be called the father of environmentalism, also deserves iconic status in the scientific fields of ecology and biodiversity studies."

— Edward O. Wilson, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University

Our publications are carried by research and public libraries around the world and are read by academics and non-academics alike. Visit our website for a listing of subscribing institutions. If you need more information, please email us at info@thoreausociety.org and put "TTS Publications" in the subject line.

Sincerely,
Michael J. Frederick
Executive Director

Here's how you can help: Encourage your local college, university, or public library to purchase a subscription to our publications or consider giving them a gift subscription. See the enclosed card in this issue for more details and consider helping us promote Thoreau's life, writings, and legacy. Thank you!

www.thoreausociety.org

*Jim Hayden, Director of Marketing and
Public Relations*

Henry wrote often of the beauty of Walden Pond in the winter. This year, we actually seem to be having a winter, with snow falling in early December, ice forming (and seemingly staying), and the quiet solitude of short days, dramatic sunsets and only a few visitors disturbing it all.

While the pond is quiet, we are quite busy as we revamp the shop for the upcoming season. Our online store is also going to undergo some upgrades to make ordering even easier. Look for new photos and descriptions of some of our regular products, as well as many new products being added each week. Check us out at: www.shopatwaldenpond.org.

We also will be starting to send out monthly updates and specials via email. In order not to clog up everyone's email, you will need to sign up to receive these messages. There will soon be a place on our website to sign up, so keep checking in.

This year we already have several new products in the works. Look for a new t-shirt coming in time for the Annual Gathering celebrating "Civil Disobedience." Also, be looking for new "green" products as we try to become more ecologically friendly. There will also be a new teacher's section of our shop and e-store, focusing on items to help with educating all age groups on Thoreau, nature and the like.

If you have any suggestions for new items, or maybe even have reviews or suggestions regarding products we currently carry, please feel free to contact us at: info@shopatwaldenpond.org

Enjoy the winter and we hope to see you in the spring at Walden Pond.



The *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, published quarterly by the Thoreau Society, is indexed in *American Humanities Index* and *MLA International Bibliography*.

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Established in 1941, the **Thoreau Society, Inc.**, is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to honor Henry David Thoreau by stimulating interest in and fostering education about his life, works, and philosophy and his place in his world and ours; by encouraging research on his life and writings; by acting as a repository for Thoreauviana and material relevant to Henry David Thoreau; and by advocating for the preservation of Thoreau Country. Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer* (published annually). Society members receive a ten-percent discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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Thoreau Society Bulletin: Robert N. Hudspeth, 118 E. Sixth St., Ontario, CA 91764 U.S.A.; e-mail: robert.hudspeth@cgu.edu.

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